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BIOGRAPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF AIR FORCE
WEATHER FORECASTERS

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D by ALAN M KERSHNER and Applications Laboratory

WILLIAM A. JENNER

12) 20 p (13) NA (14) NA (15) NA

DECEMBER #59

OPERATIONAL APPLICATIONS LABORATORY
AIR FORCE CAMBRIDGE RESEARCH CENTER
AIR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMMAND
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
BEDFORD MASSACHUSETTS

ABSTRACT

Biographical characteristics which distinguish between good and poor AF weather forecasters, as rated by colleagues, are presented for items pertaining to age, formal school and training, and on-the-job experience for 300 officers, and for 129 warrant and enlisted forecasters.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to Herbert Ozur, U. S. Civil Service Commission, for assistance in coding; to Dixon C. Burdick, Systems Analysis Branch, Naval Research Laboratory for IBM punching and tabulating assistance; and to Major Hugh W. Ellsaesser, Air Weather Service, for computational verification of some of the statistics.

BIOGRAPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF AIR FORCE WEATHER FORECASTERS

I. Introduction

This is the third report in a research program concerned with the identification of significant characteristics of AF weather forecasters and with their evaluation. The basic research program was designed to identify above average and below average AF weather forecasters. Forecasters evaluations of colleagues with whom they had worked as a forecaster provided a proficiency index for each of over 1806 weather forecasters; the demonstrated reliability of these evaluations has been described elsewhere (3). The present report offers an analysis of certain biographical characteristics as reported by three hundred AF weather officers and one hundred and twenty-nine warrant officer and enlisted weather forecasters.

For roughly four decades investigators interested in identifying objective characteristics associated with success in various occupational pursuits have found personal history items to be a fruitful source. One previous study of AF weather forecasters by Jenkins found no consistent differences between the better and poorer forecasters with respect to such personal history items as age, rank, education, college major, mathematics background, forecasting and observing experience, and forecasting aids most frequently used (1).

^{*}Because of an inviolacy pledge given to AWS forecasters for providing the primary evaluations, W. A. Jenner did not participate in any part of the work for this study which employed individual names and their associated proficiency indices.

(Jenkins did, however, find significant differences between forecasters and more general populations on several tests.) It was believed by the authors of this report that another attempt to identify differential biographical characteristics of AF weather forecasters might be warranted because of the larger populations available for study and the considerable reliability of the criterion data.

The questionnaire used to obtain the biographical data is reproduced in Appendix I; the information was obtained in late '55 and early '56. The forecaster populations used in this study were derived by including only those individuals who met the following conditions:

- a. Completed the biographical questionnaire.
- b. Possessed a proficiency index of 1.33 and above or .90 and below as developed from ratings of officers with whom they had worked as forecasters.*

High Criterion groups thus were defined as forecasters who received a proficiency index of 1.33 or higher; low criterion groups were defined as forecasters who received a proficiency index of .90 or lower. Table 1 summarizes the number of forecasters in each subgroup.

Totals in Tables 2, 3 and 4 of results that follow are sometimes less than the totals in Table 1 because certain forecasters omitted some of the questionnaire items.

*Proficiency indices were developed by scoring two points for an above average rating, one point for an average rating, no points for a below average rating and dividing the total points by the number of ratings. Added criteria for inclusion in the present study were that six ratings be available for each subject and that no subject be included in the low criterion group who was not judged below average at least twice. It should be understood that when words such as "forecasting proficiency" and the like are used in this report that their connotation is limited to ratings by colleagues.

Table 1. Number of Forecasters in each Subgroup

	High Criterion Index≥1.33	Low Criterion Index €. 90	Total
Weather Officers	159	141	300
Warrant Officers & Airmen	68	61	129
TOTAL	· 227	202	429.

For each questionnaire item analyzed, the number of forecasters giving each of the possible responses to the item was computed for the appropriate high and low criterion group separately. The two distributions were then compared statistically, using standard chi-square techniques to compute the probability (p) that the difference between the distribution could be attributed to chance alone. Traditionally, p values of .05 or less are considered to be statistically significant; values of .01 or less are considered to be highly significant. The distributions and associated p values are summarized in Tables 2, 3 and 4.

For convenience the items reported upon may be classified as associated with age, formal schooling and training, and on-the-job experience.

2. Age Variables

Two age variables (see Table 2), year of birth and age at which the subject began to forecast, were used. Year of birth exhibited no statistically significant differences for either of the two main groups; there is only about one-third of a year's difference in the mean year of birth between each of the criterion groups with low criterion officers being

TABLE 2 - AGE VARIABLES

		WEATHER OFFICERS	CERS	•	WARRANTS & AIRMEN	& AIRMEN	
		HIGH C	row		нен	MO1	
a. Mean Year of Birth	Compressed (April 2008) and the property of the compression of the com	1919.01 1918.66	99.		1918.06	1918.36	
			• . •				
b. Age Began to Forecast	15‡						
	to 24 inc. 25-29	. 09	23 .		37	19	
	30+	16 155	4 [38		10 79	8 8	
			p < 001 p < 02	,			•
•							

older, whereas the high criterion warrant and enlisted forecasters are slightly older. However, when age at which a forecaster began to forecast is considered, significant differences are found between high and low criterion officers and between high and low warrant and enlisted forecasters. These results indicate that it should be highly advantageous to secure weather forecasters prior to their reaching the age of twenty-five. The possible explanations of this result are left to the rationalization of the reader.

How dependable is the foregoing conclusion? Is the result for officers "caused" by the considerable number of #8219 subjects (see Table 3k) included in this study? To scrutinize these data more thoroughly, separate tabulations were made for the #8219 subjects and for the other remaining weather officers. The officer group, reduced by omitting the #8219 forecasters, yielded results consistent with the overall findings but not statistically significant. The #8219 group was, however, consistent and significant. These distributions are shown in Appendix II. Since both the officer and the warrant-enlisted groups yield significant differences, and since the direction of the results for both officer subgroups is consistent with the overall findings, the evidence for a valid inverse relationship between age beginning to forecast and forecasting proficiency appears strong.

3. Formal Schooling and Training

In the main, education items (see Table 3) present similar results for officer, and warrant-enlisted groups. Contrasted to these general findings, highly significant differences are found between high and low criterion officer forecasters on schooling and degrees whereas these differences are not statistically significant for warrant officers and airmen. It should be noted that the most substantial contributions to the significance of these results for officers appear <u>beyond</u> that of the college undergraduate level.

TABLE 3 - FORMAL SCHOOLING AND TRAINING

a. Schooling Grade thru High School 2 years College 4 " " & above 69 30 4 " " \$ above 159 141 b. Degrees AA or Nane B. Or AB MS, MA & above 159 141 Chemistry Chemistry Mathematics Meteorology Mothematics Miscellaneous No Information 159 141 P € 001 1 0 9 1 0 9 1 0 9 1 0 9 1 0 9 1 0 9 1 0 9 1 0 9 1 0 9 1 0 9 1 0 9 1 0 9 1 0 9 1 0 9 1 0 9 1 0 9 1 0 0 1 0 0 2 0 1 0 0 3 0 4 0 0 1 0 0 4 0 0 1 0 0 1 0 0 2 0 0 1 0 0 2 0 0 1 0 0 1 0 0 2 0 0 1 0 0 1 0 0 2 0 0 1 0 0 1 0 0 2 0 0 1 0 0 2 0 0 1 0 0 2 0 0 1 0 0 2 0 0 1 0 0 2 0 0 1 0 0 2 0 0 3 0 0 4 0 0 1			WEATHER OFFICERS HIGH LOW	OFFICERS LOW			WARRANTS & AIRMEN HIGH LOW	, AIRMEN LOW	
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TABLE 3 - FORMAL SCHOOLING AND TRAINING (CONT.)

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Unit. Equations & or Vector Analysis 72 41 00 Vector Analysis 72 41 67 High School Mathematics None, Algebra & Plane Geom, 15 Solid Geometry & or Trig. 53 68 High School Physics Pe€.01 11 No 24 30 11 Yes 135 111 57 Yes 141 Pe€.05	Integ. Calculus 57	
High School Mathematics None, Algebra & Plane Geom, Solid Geometry ∨ Trig. High School Physics No 24 30 Yes 135 111 Pp 6.05	72	
High School Mathematics None, Algebra & Plane Geom, Solid Geometry &/or Trig. High School Physics No 24 30 Yes 135 111 P.€ 05	139	
None, Algebra & Plane Geom. Solid Geometry &/or Trig. High School Physics No No 135 111 Yes 135 111 P♣€05	High School Mathematics	
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High School Physics No No 135 111 Yes 159 141 p € 05		
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TABLE 3 - FORMAL SCHOOLING AND TRAINING (CONT.)

WE	WEATHER OFFICERS	FFICERS		*	WARRANTS & AIRMEN	AIRMEN
	нзен	MOJ			HIGH	LOW
h. College Physics						
None	21	25	· ·		42	48
General rnysics Mechanics &/or Thermodynamics	4/ 89 157	52			/ ₂ / ₂ / ₈	<u></u>
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i. Public Speaking					·	
Yes	9/	8			22	17
Ŷ	83 159	19 14			94 88	4 2
i. Drawing: Eng, Mech., or Represen.		.,				
Yes	101	. 82			23	25
No	58 159	59 141			45 68	98
k。 Method of Qualifying as a Wx Forecaster	,					
Observer-Airman Forecaster In-Service Metro Cadet	45 14	24 4	p ≈ 02			
In-Service Wx Officer Course 1946-50 (#8219) Civilian Institution	26	85 28	P <. 00i			
	, ACI	4	100°>d			**

With respect to particular major subjects, significant results were found for three items. A major in engineering does not appear to provide an optimum background for officer forecasters; the direction of the data for warrant officers and enlisted forecasters is similar but not significant at the 5% level. Weather officers with miscellaneous college major subjects not listed, appear to be pour material for weather forecasting while, happily, a major in meteorology and graduate training in meteorology are positively associated with forecasting proficiency. The direction of the results for those majoring in physics and mathematics appears positively related with forecasting proficiency but the differences fall short of achieving significance at the 5% level.

The level of achievement in both mathematics and physics is found to be positively associated with forecasting proficiency. It is evident that for weather officers the largest contribution to the significance for mathematics falls beyond the calculus level whereas with physics it falls beyond the level of general college physics. With warrant officers and enlisted forecasters significant differences occur for high school mathematics and physics while for physics at the college level the direction of the results is consistent even though not statistically significant at the 5% level. These results support customary AWS requirements of having certain courses in mathematics and physics as prerequisites to weather forecaster training.

Neither courses in public speaking nor courses in drawing were found to have been taken by a significantly greater number of the better forecasters. The former was included in the questionnaire because the presentation of weather briefings forms an important aspect of the weather forecaster's job - the latter because of the possibility of disclosing a relationship between courses in drawing and the ability to visualize in three or more dimensions which is believed to be highly important in weather forecasting (2, p.16).

By far the firmest statistics in this study generate from section k of Table 2 which shows "Method of Qualifying as a Weather Forecaster". Conventional statistical tables just do not provide values to reflect such extreme deviations from chance results.

First, it is seen that a significantly greater number of better weather officers came up through the ranks than did poorer weather officer forecasters. From a practical standpoint, however, and in consideration of the many promotional hurdles surmounted, the fact that 24 of the 69 weather officers who came up from the ranks, are considered as below average weather forecasters provides a considerable challenge for the development of an improved system of evaluation. In order to ascertain whether this result might be characteristic only of so-called past or former promotion procedures, and not currently characteristic, an examination was made of the warrant officer component included in the present study. * Twenty-five per cent of this group (i.e. 15 out of 60) were judged as below average forecasters. There were also 15 warrant officers embraced in this study who were airmen when the overall research program began; of this latter group eight were evaluated as above average forecasters and seven as below average. One of the below average group had a proficiency index of .00, having been judged below average by everyone who evaluated him. No suggestion is made that forecasting proficiency should be the sole promotion criterion; however, it would appear desirable that average forecasting proficiency might at least be required,

*Other data bearing upon promotions and forecasting proficiency may be found in another report (3).

The distribution of high and low criterion weather officers qualifying as forecasters through the #8219 training program (In-Service Weather Officer Course 1946-1950) indicates ineffective initial selection, ineffective training, or a combination of both. In the main, this group of officers was faced with reduction-in-force following WW II unless they qualified for a skill for which a personnel requirement existed, such as weather forecasting. Although certain training deficiences have been reported for this program, informed opinion attributes the large number of low criterion weather officers in this group to poor selection standards which permitted entrance into a weather career to individuals without sufficient analytical ability or without a real interest in weather analysis.

Finally, it may be observed that over two and a half times as many high criterion as low criterion weather officers received their training in civilian institutions. The probability that this is a chance result is less than one in a thousand.

4. On-The-Job Experience (see Table 4)

Distributions of data pertaining to Detachment, Weather Center, Weather Central, Arctic, Tropic, and Middle Latitude experience have been omitted from Table 4 in the interest of brevity. They are available upon request. In general, they show that high criterion weather officers have spent longer periods of time in Weather Centers and Weather. Centrals than low criterion weather officers; however, some reviewers might feel retention of low criterion officers on such duty has been too extended.

Section a. of this table shows a significantly greater number of above average forecasters in the more advanced Air Force Specialties for each of the two main groups. However, it appears that in view of the number of below average forecasters in the higher AFS's that there is still room for improvement in the selection and development of forecasters for promotion and for the more advanced Air Force Weather Specialties.

TABLE 4 - ON-THE-JOB EXPERIENCE

	WEATHER OFFICERS	OFFICERS		WARRANTS & AIRMEN	IRMEN
	HIGH	LOW		нен	LOW
a. Primary AFS					
Weather Officer Weather Staff Officer Advanced Weather Officer	97 29 31 157	116	100°>d		
Weather Forecasting Technician Weather Forecasting Sup't (Warrant Officer)				23 45 68 P 600	43 58
b. Experience as an Observer Experience No "	59 100 159	31 110	<u></u> 0 ∀		
c. Instructor Experience Experience No "	22 137 159	6 135 141	10 % d	6 5 88	58 61

<u> </u>			· -		13
WARRANTS & AIRMEN HIGH LOW		0 19 19	,		
WARRANTS		1 67			
			-		
WEATHER OFFICERS HIGH LOW		11 1 148 140 159 141 p.01		15 12 144 129 159 141	
	d. Climatological Experience	Experience No "	e. Command Experience	Experience " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " "	

Experience as an observer, instructor, and in climatology appear to be positively associated with superior forecasters whereas command experience shows no association. It may be assumed that differences between high and low criterion officers in observer experience reflect the importance of a thorough knowledge of and familiarity with basic data gathering methods, the various weather codes and symbols, and plotting to the overall forecasting function. Concerning the data on experience as weather instructor, to some it may appear gratifying that there are a greater number of above average forecasters with this experience whereas others may feel that too many below average forecasters have been utilized in this fashion.

5. Suggestions for Preparation of Future Questionnaire for Weather Forecasters

It should profit future investigators to review the report "Proficiency Characteristics of AF Weather Forecasters" (3) prior to the preparation of a forecaster biographical questionnaire. Subsequent to the collection of the questionnaire data and upon review of the aforementioned report, it was apparent that better coverage might have been secured for such subjects as "Keeping Knowledge Current", "Application of Knowledge", "Improvement and Development of Methods and Techniques", "Knowledge of Local Influences", and "Knowledge of Users' Needs." For example, items which might profitably have been included are membership in professional societies, technical journals subscribed to, articles written and/or published, research or local forecast studies initiated and completed.

6. Summary and Conclusions

a. This report presents biographical data for two separate groups of Air Force weather forecasters: Three hundred weather officers and one hundred and twenty-nine warrant officer and enlisted weather forecasters. The weather officer group consists of 159 above average

(high criterion) and 141 below average (low criterion) weather forecasters. The warrant officer and enlisted weather forecasters consist of 68 above average (high criterion) and 61 below average (low criterion) forecasters.

- b. Statistically significant differences between the criterion groups are reported for items pertaining to age, schooling and training, and on-the-job experience. All too seldom do investigators have the opportunity of simultaneously examining two such educationally disparate groups in reference to a common and complex function such as weather forecasting; hence the consistencies in the data between the two main groups are matters also to be well noted.
- c. These data have important implications for the recruitment, training, assignment, and retention of AF weather forecasters.
- d. A previous report (3) offered evidence of the considerable reliability of weather officers' ratings of colleagues with whom they had worked as weather forecasters ratings used to identify the criterion groups reported upon here. This report provides noteworthy evidence attesting to the validity of these ratings.

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 AFCRC Technical Report TR 59-16, Operational Applications Laboratory, Air Force Cambridge Research Center,

 Bedford, Mass., November 1959.

APPENDIX I

BIOGRAPHICAL	QUESTIONNAIR	FOR WEATHE	R FORECASTERS	
LAST NAME . FIRST NAME . MI			SERIAL NUMBER	
PRIMARY AFSC	ADDITIONAL AFSC'S		DATE OF BIRTH	-
	<u> </u>			
<u> </u>	FORMAL S	CHOOLING		
A. COMPLETED:		•	,	
GRADE SCHOOL	IF COLLEGE: 1 YEA	=	4 YEARS COLLEGE	
HIGH SCHOOL SOME COLLEGE		ARS COLLEGE	5 YEARS COLLEGE MORE THAN 5 YEARS COL	LEGE (T)
SOME COLLEGE	3127	(N3 COLLEGE []	MORE THAN 3 TEARS COL	
B. MAJOR SUBJECT:		C. MINOR SUBJECT	Γ:	
D. DEGREES:	,	- 1.		
1. NONE		3. MS OR MA IN		
2. BS OR BA IN		4. OTHER		
	MATHEMATICS COU			
A	HIGH SCHOOL	OL COURSES	T	
1. ALGEBRA	3. PLANE GEOM	ETRY	5.	
2, TRIGONOMETRY	4. SOLID GEOME	TRY 🔲	6.	
В.	COLLEGE	COURSES		
1. ALGEBRA	4. DIFFERENTIA	L CALCULUS	7. STATISTICS	□.
2. TRIGONOMETRY	. 5. INTEGRAL CA	LCULUS	8.	O.
3. ANALYTICAL GEOMETRY	6. DIFFERENTIA	L EQUATIONS	9,	
111.		ES COMPLETED	*	
۸.	HIGH SCHOO	L COURSES		
1. PHYSICS	2		3	
В.	COLLEGE	COURSES		
1. GENERAL COLLEGE PHYSICS	3. THERMODYNA	MICS	5.	
2. MECHANICS	4.		6,	
IV.	OTHER C	COURSES		
A. PUBLIC SPEAKING	B. MECHANICAL ENGINEERING	·	C. REPRESENTATIVE DR	/міне □
V. A.	METEOR			
	SERVICE :			
WEATHER OBSERVER 1. COURSE		5. WEATHER FORE	CASTING SUPERINTENDENT	
2. ENLISTED FORECASTER COURSE NUMBER 78700	D	6. HIGH ALTITUDE COURSE NUMBE	FORECASTER R 8219	
3. METEOROLOGICAL TECHNICIAN COURSE NUMBER 25200	. 📮	7. MODERN WEAT COURSE	HER TECHNIQUES	
4. CLIMATOLOGICAL TECHNICIAN COURSE NUMBER 25271		PRE-METEORO 6. COURSE	LOGY	. 🗀

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۷. ۸.		METEOR (SERVICE SCHOOL		
9,	WEATHER OFFICER COURSE (1946-1950)	·	10, ADVANCED WEATHER OFFICER COURSE	
11.	. OTHER: B		,	
В.		CIVILIAN INS	STITUTION	
1.	METEOROLOGY CADET - A PROGRAM		·	<u>`</u> , _
2,	METEOROLOGY CADET - B PROGRAM	(school:		,
	METEOROLOGY CADET - C PROGRAM (
	BASIC WEATHER OFFICER (9MO OR 1 Y		· ·	
	GRADUATE TRAINING IN METEOROLOG			
c.		PECIAL SHORT COURS	ES IN METEOROLOGY	
1,	CLIMATOLOGY		3. EXTENDED-PERIOD FORECASTING MIDDLE-LATITUDE FORECASTING	
2.	TROPICAL METEOROLOGY		4. RESEARCH COURSE	
5,	OTHER:			
D.		OTHER METEOROL	OGY PROGRAMS	
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3,		WEATHER	CENTRAL I	* *************************************
	A. SURFACE		C. PROG SECTION	
	B', ÜPPER AIR		D. OTHER: (1)	- [
c.	AERIAL WEATHER OFFICER		D. STAFF WEATHER OFFICER OUTSIDE AWS	
E.		OTHER	AWS	
1.			3	
<u> </u>		TYPENENG!	4,	
<u></u>		EXPERIENCE	E BY AREA	
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2,	. TROPIC		4.	
G.	. AGE AT WHICH BEGAN TO FOREC	AST		YEARS

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APPENDIX 11

OF	OTHER WEATHER OFFICERS	THER OF	FICERS
HIGH LOW		HIGH	ro w
Age Began to Forecast to 24 inc. 25-29 30 & above 26 82	p < 06 > . 05	$\frac{74}{44}$	21 24 9 54
A p < .06 .05 is obtained when chi-square is calculated for "age began to forecast" between high and low criterion weather officers after the #8219 subjects are removed. For the #8219 weather officers as tabulated above the chi-square test of significance is unacceptable because of the extremely low number of expected cases in one of the cells. Accordingly, the data were retabulated to include age 25 within the lowest age range group.			-
#8219 WEATHER OFFICERS HIGH LOW			
Age Began to Forecast to 25 inc. 26-29 30 & above 26 26			
With the data as retabulated above chi-square provides a p $lacktriangle$.03			·